

The Arian Controversy

203

these bishops addressed a circular letter "to all the bishops throughout the Empire," begging them not to deny communion to the Arians and also to seek to induce Alexander to do the same. Alexander, however, stood out for unconditional surrender.

Arius returned to Palestine, where three bishops permitted him to hold services for his followers, and the wordy war continued. Alexander drew up a long encyclical which he addressed "to all his fellow-workers of the universal Catholic Church," couched in language not quite so violent as that which he had employed in writing to the Bishop of Byzantium, yet denouncing the Arians in no measured terms as "lawless men and fighters against Christ, teaching an apostasy which one may rightly describe as preparing the way for anti-Christ." In it he attacks Eusebius of Nicomedia by name, accusing him of "believing that the welfare of the Church depended upon his nod," and of championing the cause of Arius not because he sincerely believed the Arian doctrine so much as in order to further his own ambitious interests. Evidently, this was not the first time that the two prelates had been at variance, and private animosities accentuated their doctrinal differences. The more closely the original authorities are studied, the more evident is the need for caution in accepting the traditional character sketches of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. Alexander declares that he is prostrated with sorrow at the thought that Arius and his friends are eternally lost, after having once known the truth and denied it. But he adds, "I am not surprised. Did not Judas betray his